

## CHAPTER THREE

# The First Soviet Experiment in Iran

THE conquest of the Transcaucasian republics and the forcible subjection of Turkestan to Soviet rule should leave no doubt as to the Communist concept of national self-determination. Yet it might be argued that these areas formerly constituted part of the tsarist Empire and that the Soviet State simply regained what Russia had lost in a moment of weakness. The real test of the Soviet attitude toward the national independence of oriental countries had, therefore, to be sought in the areas situated historically outside of Russia's borders. In this case Iran was to become the first testing ground. The first official steps of the Soviet State toward Iran were designed to win her friendship. On January 14, 1918, the Soviet government addressed a note to Iran by which it repudiated all tsarist privileges that were contrary to the sovereignty of Iran and promised to assist the Iranians in expelling the British and Turkish troops from their country. It stated that Russia considered the 1907 treaty as no longer binding. The future relations between Russia and Iran were to be based, the note said, "upon a free agreement and mutual respect among nations." \* Earlier the Brest-Litovsk Armistice Agreement of December 15, 1917, although not involving Iran di-

rectly, contained an encouraging note for the Iranians,  
because Soviet  
Russia promised to evacuate the troops which had  
been stationed  
in Iran by the tsarist government during the war.  
The final Brest-  
Litovsk Treaty of March 3, 1918, confirmed this  
promise in general

i Quoted by Dennis, *op. cit.* p. 238.